

APPENDIX B. Public Hearing Handout

East Flagstaff Traffic Interchange

Public Hearing

Thursday, November 4, 2004



Welcome

Welcome to the public hearing for the proposed improvements to the East Flagstaff Traffic Interchange (TI). The primary purpose of tonight's hearing is to gather your comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA). The Draft EA describes and quantifies the environmental impacts that may result from the construction of the proposed reconfiguration of the TI.

There will be a short presentation tonight summarizing the project's background and describing the Preferred Alternative and its potential environmental consequences. After the presentation, we will have a brief question and answer session to respond to any general questions that you may have about the proposed improvements. After the question and answer session, project team members will be dispersed throughout the room to answer any specific questions you may have.

We appreciate your attendance tonight and most importantly value your input. A court reporter is here to record your comments so we can accurately document your input. The court reporter will record the presentation and question and answer session. Additionally, if you have statements or comments you would like to include in the project record, you may address these to the court reporter.

The following information is a summary of the Draft EA and describes the project purpose and need, background, Preferred Alternative, and potential environmental consequences. A list of the project team members is also provided for your information.

Project Purpose & Need

Currently, B-40 and US 89 each carry large volumes of regional and local traffic. The majority of regional traffic uses I-40/B-40/US 89 to travel to and from northern Arizona and Utah. All streets and roadways in the project area are expected to experience growth in traffic volumes and congestion between now and 2025. The expected growth stems from the expansion of the Flagstaff Mall, the anticipated commercial growth with the development of an auto dealership complex east of the Mall, and because of the potential residential growth in the area.

The need to improve the East Flagstaff TI has developed from increased traffic volumes that have produced greater operational and capacity demands. These conditions are projected to continue and, therefore,

exacerbate the current situation. The current roadway also has inadequate spacing between the traffic interchange ramps and access points. Projected travel congestion is expected to impede the flow of traffic on the roadway. Localized flooding of US 89 will continue, which would further reduce traffic flow if the local drainage problem is not alleviated. Additionally, extension of

the Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS) into the project area and continuous sidewalks would provide improved access for pedestrians and bicyclists through the project area and to and from the Flagstaff Mall. The purpose of the proposed improvements is to reduce traffic congestion, alleviate back-ups, improve local drainage, and enhance pedestrian and nonmotorized transportation.

BACKGROUND

In 1999 the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) initiated a Design Concept Report (DCR) of the Business Route 40 (B-40) (Country Club Drive) and US 89 Traffic Interchange (East Flagstaff Traffic Interchange) to establish a long-range plan to meet the future transportation and pedestrian demands. As part of the DCR process, public information meetings were conducted in 1999 and 2001 to solicit public comments. The Initial DCR was completed in 2001, which recommended a Single-Point Urban Interchange Alternative. However, a Value Engineering (VE) Study conducted in 2001 resulted in the re-evaluation of the alternatives. As a result of the VE Study, a different alternative (Button Hook Interchange Alternative) was recommended in the Final DCR, which was completed in 2002. In 2003 ADOT initiated the EA process and conducted a public information meeting in late 2003 to present the Single-Point Urban Interchange Alternative, Button Hook Interchange Alternative and Tee Intersection Alternative.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The Draft EA was prepared to evaluate the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the Preferred Alternative.

The Draft EA considered the potential environmental issues associated with the proposed project, including the following:

- ♦ land use
- ♦ social and economic considerations

- ♦ Title VI of the Civil Rights Act/Environmental Justice
- ♦ cultural resources
- ♦ air and noise impacts
- ♦ visual resources

A detailed determination of potential impacts of each of these environmental issues is provided in the Draft EA. Those listed to the right is a summary of some of these issues presented in the Draft EA.

Land Use. The Preferred Alternative would convert some existing commercial land uses permanently into transportation-related facilities. The Preferred Alternative would require the total acquisition of five privately owned parcels of land. These parcels include five businesses (two of which are situated on one parcel) and a vacant lot. No residences would be displaced.

Economic Considerations. Short-term economic impacts associated with construction of the Preferred Alternative would include reduced business revenue at the Flagstaff Mall and at other existing businesses within the project area because of potential customer avoidance during construction. Customer avoidance may be caused by travelers' anticipation of delays as well as out-of-direction travel. Other short-term economic impacts would also occur with the relocation of five businesses south of Lynch Avenue. The businesses that would require relocation are the Flagstaff Medical Center Physical Therapy, the Walk-in Clinic, Jake's Bar and Grill, the Rainbow Car Wash, and National Car Sales. Access to remaining businesses would be maintained during construction.

Improvements associated with the Preferred Alternative would also require temporary construction easements (TCEs) or partial takes of land on approximately 21 parcels of land (representing 19 private property owners and the City of Flagstaff); these acquisitions would not require relocation or displacement of any businesses. Partial takes and TCEs required for the Preferred Alternative would not require closures of businesses.

The Preferred Alternative is anticipated to result in long-term beneficial economic impacts. It would also provide enhanced pedestrian/bicycle and vehicular access to the Flagstaff Mall area. The improved traffic operations and improved access (including a new main entrance to the Mall) would allow for planned expansion of businesses in and near the Flagstaff Mall.

Social Considerations / Emergency Services. Flagstaff Fire Station No. 3 is located along Railhead Avenue, just east of the project limits. Access to the fire station would be maintained throughout construction. Flagstaff Fire Station Nos. 2 and 4 would also provide assistance if needed because of their location nearby. The Preferred Alternative would have a long-term beneficial impact to emergency services by providing more efficient traffic operations.

Social Considerations / Access and Traffic Patterns. Access and traffic patterns would be temporarily and permanently impacted. Under the Preferred Alternative, Lynch Avenue would be permanently disconnected from US 89; travelers from the neighborhood north of the project area would need to gain access to US 89 from either Cummings Street (approximately 1,300 feet to the east) or Kasper Drive to Lockett Road (approximately 2,700 feet to the west). Route 66 would be permanently reconfigured to provide access to US 89 by way of a two-way road just west of the Flagstaff Eastgate Commercial Center and the adjacent Elrod Manufacturing building; a temporary traffic signal would be installed at the new Route 66/US 89 intersection during construction. This new alignment would be constructed one half at a time to maintain access to the commercial center and Elrod Manufacturing.

Temporary detours for US 89, B-40, and Route 66 would also be required during construction. US 89, Route 66, and B-40 detour roads would be built and demolished after construction of the new TI roadway configuration; these areas would be incorporated into detention basins or returned to preconstruction conditions.

During removal of the B-40 bridge over US 89, the US 89 roadway would be temporarily closed to traffic. This closure is anticipated to occur during nighttime hours over one weekend. However, during the temporary closure of US 89, the contractor would allow emergency vehicles access through this construction area. During this short-term full closure of US 89, traffic could continue through the area by way of Lockett Road to Kasper Avenue to Lockett Road to Lynch Avenue to Cummings Street or the new Route 66 roadway to Spur Street to Railhead Avenue.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act/Environmental Justice. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and related statutes (including state-level ADOT Environmental Justice Guidance), ensure that individuals are not excluded from participation in, denied benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance on the grounds of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or handicap. Executive Order 12898 directs that programs, policies, and activities not have a disproportionately high and adverse human health and effect on minority and low-income populations.

A review of census data identified the racial and ethnic makeup of the city of Flagstaff and Coconino County in 2000 was predominantly White, Hispanic, and Native American. The data also resulted in the identification of a high percentage of minority and disabled individuals.

The Preferred Alternative would not disproportionately impact racial minority, elderly, and/or low-income populations in the city of Flagstaff and Coconino County because the Preferred Alternative would not displace any residences, permanently disrupt community cohesion or neighborhood continuity, permanently impact access to any community facilities, or isolate, exclude, or separate minority or low-income individuals from the broader community. There is no indication that any minority-owned businesses would be disproportionately impacted. Overall, no segment of the minority or low-income population would be disproportionately affected by the proposed project because construction-related impacts would similarly affect all residents, business people, and visitors.

Cultural Resources. The cultural resources survey identified three historic sites in the project area; the historic alignments of US 89, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, and Route 66. After consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer, it was determined that no historic properties would be adversely affected by the proposed project. The Preferred Alternative would have no short- or long-term impacts on the three cultural resources sites.

Noise. The projected impacts of traffic noise from construction of the Preferred Alternative were analyzed to identify areas that may be considered for mitigation, in accordance with the ADOT Noise Abatement Policy, dated March 21, 2000, and in accordance with the provisions of 23 CFR § 772 - Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise and Construction Noise. FHWA's Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) are delineated by land use categories and their associated acceptable exterior noise levels.

Future noise levels in the project area were evaluated for ten sensitive receivers located within 500 feet of the existing roadway centerline and represented residential land use. These sites were chosen because of their residential land use and/or proximity to the proposed improvements. The modeled noise levels along US 89 did not approach or exceed the NAC at any of the ten identified sensitive receiver sites for the existing (2003) traffic conditions and the 2025 traffic conditions. Based on the preliminary noise analysis, the Preferred Alternative would not increase noise levels for sensitive noise receivers in residential areas above ADOT's NAC.

The predicted noise levels for the Preferred Alternative average slightly higher than the predicted existing noise levels. The Preferred Alternative would produce long-term minor negative noise impacts in the project area. Short-term moderate negative impacts would be experienced during the construction of the Preferred Alternative, but would diminish once construction is completed.

Visual Resources. The Preferred Alternative would notably change the existing visual character of the setting because of the 45-foot-high retaining walls along the B-40 crossroad, the elevation of the US 89/B-40 interchange at approximately 16 feet above the existing ground, and the three detention basins along US 89. The new US 89/B-40 interchange and portions of US 89 would be a more prominent element in the existing urban setting and would be visible from the adjacent residential area.

As part of the proposed improvements, the City of Flagstaff, Coconino County, and ADOT have been working together as part of the Gateway Committee to evaluate and make recommendations on the aesthetic treatment of the new interchange and the FUTS. The landscape and aesthetic treatment plans would be reviewed and approved by the City of Flagstaff, Coconino County, and ADOT during design. Once the construction of the Preferred Alternative has been completed and the new plant material has matured, the overall scenic quality of the project area would be enhanced because the proposed improvements would create a more cohesive pattern in the landscape, complement the urban environment, and enhance the entrance to the community.

Alternatives Considered

The **Single-Point Urban Alternative** would construct a single-point urban TI with B-40 and a connector to Route 66 as the crossroad. US 89 would be elevated and grade separated over the new B-40/US 66 crossroad interchange. Some local streets and access would be reconfigured.

The **Button Hook Alternative** would construct an at-grade intersection between US 89, B-40 and Route 66. A new bridge would be constructed to allow B-40 to pass over US 89 and connect to the intersection. Some of the local streets and access would be reconfigured.

The **Tee Intersection Alternative (Preferred)** would construct a traditional signalized tee intersection with US 89 and B-40. B-40 would be widened to three lanes in each direction between US 89 and I-40 and a new bridge would be constructed over the BNSF railroad tracks. US 89 would be raised approximately 12 feet at the new intersection with B-40. US 89 would be widened to provide three lanes in each direction between Fanning Drive and Cummings Street. A new signalized intersection with US 66 and US 89 would be constructed.

New stormwater detention basins would be constructed adjacent to the new intersections to alleviate the local flooding of US 89. New sidewalks and the extension of the FUTS would provide connectivity for pedestrian traffic through this area. The Cummings Street intersection with US 89 would be improved and signalized to include a new entrance to the Flagstaff Mall.

PROJECT TEAM

ADOT and consultant representatives are available tonight to discuss the proposed improvements and answer questions. Representatives from the Project Team are wearing nametags so you can easily recognize them. Representatives from ADOT are John Harper, Flagstaff District Engineer, Bahram Dariush, Project Manager, Justin White, Environmental Planner, and Fred Garcia, Noise Specialist. Assisting ADOT with the engineering effort is Paul Waung, Project Manager from DMJM+HARRIS, and Diane Simpson-Colebank with Logan Simpson Design Inc. is responsible for the Draft EA. Tiffin Miller is from the City of Flagstaff.

Your Input

The primary objective of the hearing tonight is to obtain your input on the findings of the Draft EA. Please take the time to put your comments in writing on the Comment Sheet, speak with one of the Project Team members here tonight, or provide your comments to the court reporter. You may leave your comments with us tonight or send them to us by **November 19, 2004**. Please submit your comments to:

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Copies of the Draft EA are available at the ADOT Flagstaff District Office, as well as the Flagstaff City Hall, Coconino County Administrative Building, and the East Flagstaff Community Library.